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AMGT, MG, EAGR, HHS, CH

SUBJECT: MGSF01 H1N1 SWINE FLU OUTBREAK - CHINA SITREP # 1 - NO
REPORTED CASES, A PORK IMPORT BAN, AND OFFERS TO HELP

REF: A) BEIJING 1132 B) STATE 42349 C) STATE 41768

1. (SBU) SUMMARY: As of COB April 28 Beijing time, no cases of swine influenza (AH1N1) virus infection in humans or livestock had been reported by the local press or government authorities. As a precaution, the Chinese General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection, and Quarantine (AQSIQ) on April 25 issued a national order for increased surveillance and detection practices to be employed at ports of entry. AQSIQ also imposed on April 26 a ban on pork imports from Mexico and three U.S. states, which Post protested and continues to monitor. Post received a diplomatic note dated April 26 from the Ministry of Health (MOH) expressing sympathy and pledging cooperation and assistance under existing bilateral agreements. Separately, the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention (China CDC) sent a letter to U.S. CDC offering support. As part of mission procedures for preparation and response to outbreaks, Post has reviewed relevant tripwires and the Emergency Action Committee is on standby to convene. A management notice providing guidance to the Embassy community also was issued on April 28, and a warden message to the local American community will be sent soon. The Embassy is also reaching out to selected foreign embassies in Beijing to share relevant and updated information. END SUMMARY.

2. (U) While news of the international swine flu outbreak has been front page news in China for the last week, to date, neither the Chinese press nor the Chinese health authorities have reported or confirmed any cases occurring in China. No suspected cases have been reported among arriving international passengers from Mexico, the United States, or elsewhere. However, local press have reported sporadic cases of routine influenza, including news of over 100 primary school students in Liquan County in Shaanxi Province (1200 kilometers southwest of Beijing and 50 km west of Xi'an) with influenza-like symptoms since April 20. (NOTE: Local health officials have not yet isolated the cause of these cases. However, given the remoteness of this location, it is unlikely that these cases are swine flu. END NOTE). MOH has established a Chinese interagency working group to monitor and respond to developments in the swine flu outbreak, along with the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA).

3. (U) AQSIQ, the Chinese government entity with primary

responsibilities for health inspections at ports of entry, issued an order on April 25 stating that all arriving passengers at international airports in China should declare (on a voluntary basis) whether they are experiencing flu-like symptoms. At the same time, local-level Import and Export Inspection and Quarantine (CIQ) officials working at airports processing flights from "infected areas" (specifically Federal District, San Luis, and Mexicali in Mexico, and California and Texas in the United States) to employ enhanced temperature detection (i.e. infrared monitoring) and medical inspection practices. The AQSIQ guidance also instructed that infected or suspected cases be placed under public health observation, quarantine, and transfer to a designated hospital for treatment, and that CIQ officers at ports of entry should self-protect against transmission.

14. (U) On April 26, the Chinese National Tourism Association issued a travel warning urging Chinese tourists to postpone travel to Mexico. On April 28, the Beijing CIQ issued additional guidance stating that all passengers landing in Beijing from the United States, Canada, United Kingdom, France, and New Zealand will have their temperature monitored and undergo medical exams onsite if they exhibit symptoms. For flights from the United States and "other key endemic countries," additional pre-disembarking quarantine procedures like visual monitoring and disinfection (exact procedures unclear) was set to begin April 28. Press reports indicate that at some large events, for example the China Import and Export Fair (Canton Fair) currently in progress, procedures have been implemented to "enhance inspection and detection" as well.

15. (SBU) On April 27, AQSIQ notified U.S. Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) officers that they had issued a ban on

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live pigs from Mexico and from the United States (specifically from California, Texas, and Kansas). APHIS urged AQSIQ not to impose any restrictions on U.S. live pigs and pork, emphasizing the virus has not been found in U.S. pigs and cannot be spread by eating pork or pork products. (NOTE: Following AQSIQ's meeting with USDA, AQSIQ subsequently announced a ban on pork and pork products, as well as on live pigs, and stated that arriving shipments would be returned or destroyed. Although the AQSIQ announcement only mentioned three U.S. states, APHIS later confirmed these restrictions also apply to New York and Ohio. Post expects China will expand these restrictions as human cases of swine flu are reported in additional states. In 2008, U.S. exports of pork to China reached a record \$540 million while live pig shipments exceeded a record \$12 million. END NOTE (REF A))

16. (SBU) Post received in recent days two official messages from Chinese authorities offering support to the USG as the outbreak continues in the United States. According to press reports, the Chinese government has made similar offers to the Mexican government via the Mexican Embassy in Beijing. MOH transmitted a diplomatic note dated April 26, which expressed sympathy to those afflicted in the United States and offered "any necessary assistance" for China CDC to cooperate and closely communicate with U.S. CDC under existing bilateral agreements to "improve prevention and control of this emergent public health issue of international concern." Specific areas mentioned include epidemiological investigations, laboratory testing, clinical treatment, and prevention and control measures. China CDC Director WANG Yu echoed this sentiment in a separate letter (also dated April 26), stating that China CDC would "do our utmost to support U.S. CDC in efforts to investigate and control the spread of this outbreak" and promised to share information on influenza virus surveillance in China through the U.S. CDC Beijing Office Director. The letter went on to delegate China CDC's chief coordinating authority to Dr. Zijian FENG, a researcher currently taking part in an exchange fellowship program on emerging infectious diseases with U.S. CDC in Atlanta. Post has prepared a response to the diplomatic note, formally acknowledging and expressing appreciation for the offers.

17. (SBU) Relevant offices within the Embassy have been mobilized, first with a meeting to review avian influenza tripwires to guide further action should it become necessary. A management notice offering guidance to Embassy staff and families was issued on April

28, and a warden message to local American citizens in China is being cleared by CA/OCS for planned release on April 29. Post's Emergency Action is on standby to assess and implement appropriate procedures (including a possible town hall meeting) as the situation unfolds.

18. U) Post will continue to report relevant developments as they occur.

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